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U.S.-Israeli trade in spying data is placed on hold

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JERUSALEM — Routine exchanges of intelligence information between officials of the U.S. government and Israeli diplomats in Washington have been suspended in the wake of the Jonathan J. Pollard espionage case, according to knowledgeable sources here.

The sources emphasized that they believe the suspension is temporary and does not affect higher-level contacts between the two governments. But the "routine exchanges," they said, would not be resumed until after a U.S. investigative team has completed its questioning here of several Israelis tied to the Pollard case.

Mr. Pollard, a civilian employee in U.S. naval intelligence, was arrested in Washington November 21. He allegedly sold military secrets to the Israelis that lay outside the range of intelligence data the United States and Israel normally trade.

Sources here said that the suspension halts, for the moment, regular meetings in Washington between Israeli diplomats and officials of the U.S. State Department's Intelligence and Research division.

A high-ranking Israeli official, acknowledging that the routine exchanges appeared to have been put on hold, said, "It's only natural that some contacts are temporarily suspended."

But, he added, "To the best of our knowledge only a few meetings scheduled by our embassy people in Washington won't take place in the next few days."

Another source said specifically that a meeting that had been scheduled for Wednesday between Israeli diplomats and officials of the Intelli-

gence and Research division had been canceled.

The division collects intelligence data gathered by "covert sources," which it shares with other U.S. agencies and occasionally with "some U.S. allies," according to one source here.

Both U.S. and Israeli officials in Jerusalem appeared eager to prevent the development from being blown out of proportion.

Israeli and U.S. Embassy officials pointed out that a meeting of the U.S.-Israeli Joint Military and Political Group took place last week. Moreover, they noted, an Israeli group is still scheduled to go to Washington soon to explore Israel's potential involvement in the Reagan administration's Strategic Defense Initiative, the "star wars" program.

Last week, Prime Minister Shimon Peres formally apologized to Washington over the implications of the Pollard case and promised full cooperation in the investigation.

Washington expressed satisfaction with the prime minister's apology. A team of U.S. investigators is expected to arrive here by the beginning of next week to interview Israeli figures who have been tied to the Pollard case.

They are Rafi Eitan, who is said to have been the controller of an obscure intelligence unit in the Israeli Defense Ministry that obtained information from Mr. Pollard, and two Israeli science attaches who were summoned back to Israel the day after Mr. Pollard was arrested.

"They are going to be interviewed, not interrogated," an Israeli official said yesterday. "They are going to have a discussion."